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ABSTRACT

The records of 27 sixth-grade students who were receiving special services were studied. A survey was conducted in three separate elementary schools to see if these same students were recipients of Basic Skill Instruction during the second grade. The data collection form included information about current reading grade levels and types of special education classification. Results of the refined population indicate 14 students received remediation in both the second and sixth grades. This population had the lowest reading levels within the sample population. Each student's classification and reading level is discussed. Implications for instruction are suggested. Contains 31 references. An appendix contains a suggested format for data collection. (Author/RS)

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Examining the At-risk Reader During the Elementary and Middle School Years

By

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Abstract

The records of twenty-seven sixth grade students who were receiving special services in the sixth grade of 1998 were studied. A survey was conducted in three separate elementary schools to see if these same students were recipients of Basic Skill Instruction during the second grade. The data collection form included information about current reading grade levels and types of special education classification.

Results of the refined population indicate fourteen students received remediation in both the second and sixth grades. This population had the lowest reading levels within the sample population. Each student's classification and reading level is discussed. Implications for instruction are suggested.

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It has been noted that early reading is crucial to continued learning and academic success. Students who do not learn to read or fall substantially behind their classmates in reading skills during the first three years of school typically do not catch up in later grades (Goodlad, 1984; Juel, 1988; Kos 1991: Stanovich, 1986). Such early reading failure is one of the causes most often cited for referral to special education, later grade retention, academic failure, dropping out (Reitzammer, 1990), and even lack of adult employability (Anderson et al., 1985Bishop, 1991; NCEE, 1984).

Many of the at-risk students do not have the literacy experiences necessary to provide a framework for the instruction they receive in school. (Heath, 1983; Mason, 1884; Teale &Sulzby, 1986; Wells, 1985). Traditional remedial programs are unequal to the task of remedial instruction. Neither pull –out (see Cohen, Intelli, & Robbins, 1978; Glass & Smith, 1977; Johnston, Allington, & Afflerbach, 1985) nor in-class (Slavin & Madden, 1987) models provide enough support or the right kind of support for slow-progress readers. Educators cite programs where "pull in" instruction is employed, such as side-by-side reading instruction, mixed pull-in pull-out instruction, team teaching using basal materials, literature and cooperative learning as being more effective (Gelzheiseer and Joel).

Traditional remedial programs report gains, but children seldom catch up with their peers, and there is no evidence of long –term effects from such efforts (Carteer, 1984; Slavin, 1987). Savage (1987) argues that compensatory education programs are encumbered by regulations that lead to the exclusive use of pull -out programs. These programs are inefficient; they segregate slow learners and stigmatize them.

Reading Recovery is one pullout program with proven success. It is a literature -based early intervention program designed to help young at-risk children become readers. It begins early, provides intensive one-to-one help, provides long-term special training for teachers, focuses on strengths instead of deficits and immerses the child in reading and writing rather than drilling on skills and "items" of knowledge. Reading Recovery grew out of and is compatible with a whole language philosophy and approach to literacy education (Pinnell, 1989). Efficacy data indicate impressive results, with reductions in special education placement (Pedron). Slavin and Wasik have researched this program and other one-to-one tutoring programs used to prevent reading failure. They are instructionally effective but expensive. Reviewing potential benefits and comparing them to the other interventions make the costs justifiable (CDS Report; Nov 1990).

How do we help the student who received remediation in the lower grades and still has reading difficulty in middle school? Various federal and state laws, regulations and policies influence whether a low-achieving reader is categorized as "disadvantaged" or "disabled" and consequently what instructional interventions would be used. Low achieving readers are being referred to special education at high rates while the number of eligible students served in compensatory reading programs for the economically disadvantaged is declining. Statistics show a decline in reading failure as an environmental deficit and an increase in organic impairment as an explanation (McGill-Franzen). Whatever the cause of this deficit junior high and senior high school content area teachers feel unwilling or unable to teach "reading" to their students (Bintz). One teacher describes an eighth grade student who could neither read nor write. She referred her to Directed Individualized Reading (DIR), which employs books on audiocassettes (Carroll). Another school employed a class wide peer mediated program to help middle grade students with mild disabilities and reading difficulties. Cases such as these expose a need for developmental reading programs in middle and high schools (Fuchs). These programs require reading activities for students at various ability levels. Content area teachers can help by using strategies that aid understanding of various content area curriculums

(Manning). When a student has reading difficulties they are not engaged in their work. This could result in discipline problems. At Redding Middle School discipline referrals were high and reading test scores were low. They applied Bloom's theory of mastery learning to improve student competency in reading. Data showed a 20% reduction in discipline referrals and a substantial increase in reading achievement scores (Freeby).

Goodman (1986) suggests that the real answer for ending reading difficulties is to reshape regular classroom instruction toward a whole-language model (Pinnell, 1989). Alternatives to pull out programs that promote literature based reading programs are currently used in special education classrooms. Not only do literature based programs help students become better readers; they also promote the desire to read (D'Alesandro). Increasing the coherence between remedial programs and regular classroom programs could also speed the progress of readers with difficulties (Allington & Broikou). Controversy exists regarding what kind of program is most successful for the at-risk reader. However, most educators support the need for extra help for the at-risk student (Madden & Slavin). Good teaching in the regular classroom is and must be the first priority for educators (Clay, 1985); no "extra program can compensate for poor teaching and barren classroom environments." Teachers, administrators, policy

makers and researchers continue to search for more successful and cost – effective ways to help these struggling students learn how to read. (Knapp, Windsor 1998).

Students who do not have a good foundation in reading in the primary grades will have difficulty with reading comprehension in the upper grades. This difficulty with reading will interfere with reading comprehension in the content areas, such as science and social studies. In turn these students will have difficulty answering written questions, participating in class discussions and doing well on cumulative chapter tests. This reading deficit could also effect the students' performance on standardized testing. Poor reading ability could be a function of the students' inability to master instruction or it could indicate a learning disability. These students may eventually be recommended for special services as a result of poor reading performance. Recidivism and assignment to special education services will not be the result of remediation and reading difficulties in the primary years.

Hypothesis

The students who are receiving special education services in the Language Arts area in the six grades will not have also been the recipients of

Basic Skills Instruction in the second grade. A student's inability to decode and comprehend written material will not have a direct relationship on his/her ability to perform successfully in the content areas.

Procedure

A group of students who were in the second grade in 1994 and who received Basic Skills Instruction for reading was chosen for this study. The records of these students were reviewed to determine who also received special education services for language arts in the sixth grade. A small suburban school district was selected. The survey was conducted in three separate elementary schools in the town. One of the three schools reported a high rate of mobility. This was attributed to the fact that there were many multiple dwelling complexes in that area of town. The other two areas had more single-family dwellings and more students who began at second grade and were still enrolled at the sixth grade level.

Approval from the school district for this study began with a meeting between the researcher, the Director of Special Services and the Director of Curriculum. A copy of the thesis proposal was presented for their approval, discussion followed. It was determined at that meeting that the researcher

would develop a uniform format to collect the data from the school records in each building, and these forms would be approved at the second meeting. The format for the collection of data presented to them included the following: a column for the student's name, a column to note that they were recipients of Basic Skills Instruction in second grade, a column to note whether or not they were recipients in the sixth grade, their current grade level for reading and the students type of classification. The format was approved at the second meeting but an issue of confidentially surfaced. In order to keep the identity of the special education students confidential the district was unwilling to allow the researcher to review the records. The administration did however wish to continue the study. It was recommended that memos be sent to each school's building principal explaining the study and requesting that they assign someone to review the records and complete the data form. A packet was developed for each building, which included the memo, a copy of the researcher's proposal, a data collection sheet, and a return envelope with postage. The format for data collection was amended to include a column where a number could be assigned to each student. In this way the principals could cut off the column with the students name before returning it to the researcher. All three schools were cooperative and mailed back the information in a timely fashion. One particular school

returned an additional sheet with references he called "Comment Codes". These codes gave insight into the types of classifications and testing used to determine reading levels.

Results

The original population studied was twenty-seven sixth grade students who were receiving remediation in the language arts area. Further examination of the population revealed that a sample population of thirteen students had to be eliminated from the study for various reasons.

Nine of the students were already classified at the second grade level therefore they were automatically considered for remediation. Referral to Basic Skill Instruction did not apply to them. These students meet the criteria for classification in the area of Specific Learning Disability (SPD), Emotionally Disturbed (ED), Auditorially Handicapped (AH) and 0ther Health Impairments (OHI). A Specific Learning Disability is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. The classification of Emotionally Disturbed describes a student who exhibits behavior disorders. These students have difficulties relating to peers, siblings, students and teachers.

This behavior has a profound impact educationally, socially and academically. Auditory Handicaps indicate that a student has a hearing impairment. Reading is the academic area most negatively affected by a hearing impairment. Students who are hearing impaired have significant difficulty succeeding in a system that depends on the written and spoken word to transmit knowledge. Other Health Impairments (OHI) means limited strength, vitality or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems, which adversely affects educational performance. The current reading grade levels for these sixth graders were as follows: 4.3, 4.5, 5.1, 5.5, 5.7, 6.1 6.2 6.6, and 7.1.

Three of the sixth grade students were eliminated because the district did not have records for them from the second grade. These students were transfer students. The current reading grade level for these sixth graders are as follows: 6.0, 6.6 and 8.8.

The last student was eliminated because that student was referred to Basic Skill Instruction in the third grade.

The refined population for analysis included fourteen sixth grade students all receiving remediation in the Language Arts area. There were nine students who were receiving remediation in the Language Arts areas who did not have Basic Skills Instruction in the second grade. The current

reading grade levels for these students were as follows: 5.0, 5.4, 6.0, 6.1, 6.6, 6.7, 7.3, 9.0 and 12.1.

There were five students who received Basic Skill Instruction in the second grade and were still receiving remediation in the sixth grade. Four of these students are now classified with Specific Learning Disabilities. This group had a range of reading levels that included 2.8, 3.9, 4.1 and 4.8. The remaining student was classified as Perceptually Impaired and was reading at grade level even though perceptual impairments can prevent a student from adequately perceiving and reproducing auditory and/or visual information.

Conclusions

Although this group was eliminated from our sample it is interesting to note the reading levels of the students who were classified in second grade and are still receiving services in sixth. One student read above grade level and two read significantly below grade level. The remaining six students' scores were commensurate with their grade level. Most of these students were classified with Specific Learning Disabilities. This would indicate that remedial instruction had been effective with most of the students.

The second group of students eliminated from our population, those receiving services now that did not receive them in the second grade were mostly made up students with Other Health Impairments. Two of these students read above grade level and two read below. However, the majority of scores were commensurate with grade level. Their average reading score was higher than the group with Specific Learning Disabilities.

The groups with the lowest overall reading scores were the students who received Basic Skill Instruction in the second grade and are being remediated in the language arts area in the six grade. In other words, they were not classified students when they received Basic Skill Instruction. Four of the five readers were now classified with Specific Learning Disabilities and all read several grade levels below sixth. The student with the Perceptual Impaired classification reads at grade level.

This suggests that students with disabilities have deficits in the area of reading. These reading deficits although addressed at the elementary level do persist into the middle school years. Implications for educators should emphasize early intervention. Screening for reading difficulties and remediation for deficits should occur after first grade. Remediation should not be terminated unless a student is reading commensurate with their grade level. Educators should continue to assess and evaluate the programs and

methods used to implement instruction. Special educators along with elementary and middle school classroom teachers should employ those programs and methods deemed most successful. Despite the overwhelming numbers of students with reading deficits in the middle schools, reading curriculums are still focused on elementary students. It is time we incorporate reading instruction in the curriculums of our upper level schools.

A major limitation of this project was the small sample of students studied. A large portion of the population studied was eliminated due to variables uncovered during the data collection. In order to support the findings of this study, a much larger sample should be obtained.

Related Research

The At-risk Reader

U.S. research at both the national and state levels indicates that students experience a declining interest and slowing development in reading through junior high and senior high school grades (Farr, Fay, Myers, & Ginsberg, 1987) The 1986 National Assessment of Education Progress (Applebee, Langer & Mullis) reported: Poor readers have insufficient time in school for independent reading and do less independent reading than good readers, poor readers use a narrower range of strategies to guide their own reading than good readers and students from at risk populations perform poorly when compared to the national population at each grade level. Chall (1983) notes that "although students demonstrate gains in reading during the early years, these gains seem to taper off in the middle and upper grades, and decline during the high school years. Goodlad (1984) suggests that part of the problem might exist in the relationship between reading decline and time spent on reading instruction, noting that "excluding the common reading activity of oral turntaking from a common text, reading occupies only approximately 6% of class time in elementary school, 3% in Junior high school, and 2% in senior high school." Humphrey reports thirty-eight percent of students whose reading ability falls two or more grade levels below their actual placement are not provided any special assistance. A

quarter of the surveyed schools do not offer remedial programs, while the others do not have enough support for those who need it. Umans wrote: "One of the most difficult tasks is to help subject-matter teachers see the necessity of teaching skills directly related to the reading matter of the particular subject. Somehow, the feeling persists that reading is always taught 'elsewhere' and 'at another time." Math teachers state that students can't read and understand math problems; science teachers state that students can't read texts to conduct laboratory experiments; home economics teachers state that students can't follow written instructions; industrial arts and vocational teachers state that students can't read and don't follow procedures thus putting themselves in physical danger when operating machinery and equipment; English teachers state that students can't read and don't comprehend poems, short stories and novels. Increasing numbers of middle and secondary school students do not perceive reading as meaningful, and thus do not value the act or the process. (Bintz) The problem that students can't read, won't read or don't comprehend what they read exists. However, it is not a student thing, or a teacher thing, or a text book thing, or somebody elses' thing that causes the problem. Bintz states this faulty belief system simplifies a complex problem. Colleges and universities need to reevaluate and rethink the role that the reading educator

plays within the teacher education curriculum. School districts and state departments need to reexamine their commitment in the area of reading. Changing perceptions of reading has to occur on two levels – one instructional and the other theoretical and curricular. Teachers see their instructional strategies as expressions of their personal values about how people learn in general and in particular how people learn how to read. (Bintz)

How and when do students learn to read? Most educators would assume that by high school a student has "learned" to read. President Clinton answered that question when he announced his goal in his State of the Union Address on January 20, 1997 by stating "every child (in the United States) will be able to read by the end of third grade." The Reading Corps he proposed used volunteers to provide individualized tutoring for children in kindergarten through Grade three who want and need it. The Department of Education's document cites research evidence that tutoring is effective and describes some characteristics of successful tutoring programs. The Department of Education does not emphasize that tutoring programs vary dramatically in their effectiveness. (Roller, 1998) Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik (1982) indicate that: tutoring programs that tell tutors what to do are better than those less prescribed; tutoring in math is generally more effective than

tutoring in reading; programs using word pronunciation and factual questions show more gains than those using higher level comprehension skills; programs in which tutors give hints to the tutees to solve their own problems are more effective than those in which the tutor provides the answers; tutors who demonstrate and explain strategies are more effective than those who do not; complete tutoring programs are more effective than those that focus on a single aspect of reading and finally, programs that include sound –awareness training are generally more effective than those that do not.(Roller 1998) The University of Iowa met this challenge and set up a program called the Summer Residential Program (SRP) in 1996 employing graduate students seeking certification in special education and reading specialization. The basic activities these sessions included were as follows: 1. Reading easy books to build confidence; 2. Reading new books that include a few challenges; 3. A writing activity; 4. A mini-lesson about word recognition strategies, comprehension strategies or other critical skills; and 5.reading challenging books. SRP tutoring sessions as well as Success for All (Wasik & Slavin, 1983) and Reading Recovery (Handerhan, 1990), spend over half the tutoring sessions actually reading books. (Roller, 1998)

Reading Recovery, Success for All and Accelerated Schools (Allington) are all programs offered as alternatives to retention for the low achieving

student. Each originated in schools with concentrations of low- income children. Each provides students with sufficiently intense personal and high quality instruction. All of these can be funded by redirecting sources that already exist. (Colby, 1998) Reading Recovery was developed by Marie Clay in New Zealand. Reading Recovery is designed to accelerate the reading development of children who are having difficulty learning to read. The lowest achieving first graders participate in an intensive daily 30-minute individual tutorial until they develop self-monitoring skills and reach the average achievement level of their classmates. The average Reading Recovery student makes enough progress in 12-14 weeks to be discontinued. Children show normal development after release and progress satisfactorily without further assistance. Dyer (1992) notes that the effectiveness of this short-term intervention, combined with reductions in retention's and referrals to child study teams seem to make Reading Recovery very cost effective for helping low-achieving students. (Colby, 1998)

Can Reading Recovery, a program designed for first graders be adapted to any age? Not only can it be adapted but also when paired with authentic, high interest reading; older students begin to thrive. (Ballash, 1994) Nancy Lee and Judith Neal described their successful adaptation of Marie Clay's Reading Recovery program in the December 1992/January 1993 issue of

Journal of Reading. Ballash set out see if she could get the same results with an 11th grade student Yazmin, who read at a fifth grade instructional level. She chose *Sarah, Plain and Tall,* a deceptively simple story that's both touching and ageless. A reading miscue inventory was administered and her strengths were brought to her attention. First Yazmin reread familiar material from *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, and then Ballash picked up the tempo by reading aloud to Yazmin. Next, a minilesson on needed skills or vocabulary building was taken from context. Yazmin continued reading from new material and finally they moved to the computer for their Language Experience Approach activity. Yazmin dictated stories from her own experience and chose a journal as a creative response format. Ballash saw Yazmins active imagination, how she stepped into character and how she remained true to her literary voice. Her mistakes were corrected while her motivation was high. The same approach was used for a second novel, *Shabanu, Daughter of the Wind* by Suzanne Fisher Staples. Although the seventh grade reading level was challenging she couldn't ask for more in the area of interest. This soon became her favorite book. (Ballash, 1994).

There are some differences in using Reading Recovery with older students. This approach was designed to prevent failure and the loss of self-esteem before it occurs. Ballash had to constantly show Yazmin her

progress by sharing her running record with her. She also looked for opportunities to show her strategies she was using effectively to make her more cognitively aware. In designing a program for older students it is highly recommended to read aloud to a student. This is a great opportunity for thinking aloud, sharing visualizations and making predictions. Enjoyment becomes the goal as the student sees that even the teacher makes mistakes. The writing connection is also key to this approach. Language experience approach teaches the student to reread for meaning, provides content for language learning and allows students to use a speaking vocabulary that is greater than their reading vocabulary. (Ballash, 1994)

The second program designed by Allington (1992) is Success for All. This program is designed to ensure that all children successfully develop reading and writing proficiency in the early grades. The program stresses the importance of ensuring school success in the primary classroom. Students receive additional instruction as soon as they need it. School resources are used creatively. The goal is to have all children reading on grade level by the end of third grade with no referrals to special education. Students are grouped by reading levels across age levels for the core reading and language arts curriculum. There is an emphasis on at home reading at night. A reorganization of school staff provides reading tutors for children

experiencing difficulty. During a daily 90-minute session, tutors serve as additional teachers, thereby reducing class sizes during this time. Each school has a family support team that includes a parent liaison and a social worker. (Colby 1994)

Success for All has been implemented in the Baltimore City Schools, as well as in other urban school districts. Although the program goal of all children reading on level was not met in the Baltimore schools, the reading achievement of these students was much higher than those who attended comparison schools. (Colby 1994)

"One interesting trend in outcomes from comparisons of Success for All and control schools relates to changes in effect sizes according to the number of years a school has been implementing a program" (Slavin et al., 1996) Data clearly show that the longer a school is in the program, the better the effects on the reading performance of students in all grades. Results are best reflected by the students who are in the lowest quarter of their grades: grade 1 +. 77; grade 2 +. 61; grade 3 + .87. It was logical that the highest SFA effect was on the lowest achieving 25% who were able to receive greater individualized attention through tutoring, regrouping, and smaller class size than were their counterparts in the control groups. Overall, SFA students out performed their matched control groups by almost three months

in the first grade, almost five months in the second grade, and almost seven months in third grade. (Carro 1999)

A final trend in retention described by Allington (1992) is Accelerated Schools (AS). The goal of an accelerated school is to have at risk children achieving at their grade level before they go to middle school. This goal is accomplished through a process of community inquiry to redesign elementary schools. In AS projects, curriculum and instructional decisions are the responsibility of teachers. Classroom teachers are viewed primarily as change agents, since they spend more time with at- risk students than anyone else in the school. However, administrators, parents, teachers and other staff members compromise a steering committee and various task forces. The steering committee is responsible for the general reform of the school, while task forces address specific issues. Over 100 AS schools are in operation in 16 states. The AS process is estimated to be a 6 year effort for transformation from a traditional elementary school into an alternative school. Since no alternative school has been in operation for 6 years, no evaluations have been completed as to the effectiveness of this program. However, it can be noted that the AS school in operation have seen a significant reduction in retention rates. (Colby 1998).

The aforementioned projects tutor the at-risk student whose reading difficulties are largely due to socioeconomic factors. What about students with mild or severe learning disabilities? For these students a multisensory approach to reading may be more in order. Orton and Gillingham have developed excellent reading programs with such a philosophy. Orton and Gillingham were trailblazers back in the 1930's to 1940's. Their multisensory philosophy was designed for the teaching of a kind of structured logical mode of thinking. (Sheffield 1991).

Orton-Gillingham teaching ties writing tightly into the learning process. A student is directly taught reading, handwriting, spelling, and expressive writing as a part of one logical body of knowledge. He is taught language as a science. The steps of learning are built closely together. His teacher continually teaches small logical pieces of language and then connects them to what the student already knows. New learning is always linked to earlier learning. (Sheffield 1991)

Neurology and psychology teach that learning builds brain structure (Lenneberg 1970). Suppose we consider multisensory teaching in a kind of diagram. We first draw a central circle that represents thought and abstract thinking. That circle represents a youngster's computer for thought and language, his ablility to play the category game with words (Vygotsky

1971). In a sense we are programming software to make a student's language computer work more efficiently (Sheffield 1991).

Gillingham and Stillman (1956) stressed the idea of possessing three main learning channels by which anyone learns to read or exist. The visual channel, the auditory channel and the kinesthetic-tactile channel are simultaneously used to build learning. The visual channel supplies visual memory that allows us to retain all the pieces that go into a total inventory of words. The auditory channel provides auditory memory with a mechanism called short-term ear memory. This provides a person with the ability to play back what they have just heard. The kinesthetic –tactile channel is the strongest learning channel for all of us. It provides us with a way to feel the muscles of the throat and mouth produce a sequence of sounds. It also provides us with the ability to write the words as we sound them out. All three channels should fire off simultaneously so that the retrieval can become simultaneous. In a learning disabled child these three channels may not all be firing at once. (Sheffield 1991) The term "dyslexia" is used to describe this condition. Dyslexia is a term that indicates an inability to read. Generally, theorists who assume that an inability to read is associated with brain based abnormalities use the term most frequently. (Bender 1992)

Andrew is one such example. Virginia L. Biasotto stated that in school there was a dramatic difference in the way Andrew approached learning. While other children were learning their letters, he played in the workshop. He was very happy, but we were terribly concerned. Unfortunately school officials were not. They felt he was just a little immature and that he would catch up eventually. By the end of first grade he was not able to read or write. He wouldn't even look at a book and his writing was sometimes upside down and backwards. He repeated first grade with no change. His report card read, "No effort. No achievement. Kicking and spitting on the playground." By the time we experimented with daily tutoring, developmental lenses, eye tracking exercises, the Feingold diet, Ritalin, and summer school programs our happy child was a miserable sixth grader who faced junior high with little or no reading skills (Biasotto 1993).

Andrew attended a special school in Baltimore called Jemicy. The Orton –Gillingham style of instruction enabled him to read at grade level for the first time in his life. Biasotto herself trained at the school and returned home to begin a volunteer tutoring service called Project ASSIST employing these methods.

In Delaware, Project ASSIST teachers and volunteers are making a difference and having fun doing it. Children are learning and nothing breeds

success like success. (Biasotto, 1993). What is project ASSIST (Alphabetic Sound Symbol Instructional Systematically) and how does it work? Project Assist works in this way. Volunteers attend class once a week for ten weeks for a total of 30 hours of instruction in a program based on the Orton-Gillingham and Spalding Approaches to reading, writing and spelling. At the conclusion of their training, they form teams of volunteers who work with three children, one-on-one, in a designated school. The children are selected by school personnel and pretested by a volunteer psychologist to establish a baseline and suitability for the program. Each volunteer is responsible for one day each week. Since Project Assist is based on a sequential presentation of phonograms, spelling, and syllable division rules, each tutor is in weekly contact with the person who precedes and follows her in order to ensure a smooth progression through the process for each child. The manual is the tutor's guide. (Biasotto, 1993)

Each tutoring session is structured to include: alphabetic sequencing, a review of phonograms for reading, review of something previously taught, instruction in something new, practice in reading with *Just Words* and the *Assist Reader*; review of spelling single sounds; spelling and sentence dictation and an oral review of the lesson. The tutors use music (rhythm and song), art, drama, stories, and games to ensure learning in both hemispheres

of the brain. Each tutoring session lasts for approximately 45 minutes. The average time that is required for the student to complete the program is two years.

Another Orton program designed for use in the general classroom is called Project Read. This is designed to be used with the bottom reading group across an entire school system. Project Read has a complete progression which integrates reading and writing and includes decoding, vocabulary sentence structure, paragraph structure and comprehension. Green and Enfield's work stresses that dyslexic students need both structure and the creative aspects of the language. Creativity without form leads dyslexics to chaos, but form without creativity becomes "boring, boring, boring." (Greene 1982)

There are many services offered for students who are not dyslexic but have mild learning disabilities. Allington points out that, historically, U.S. public schools have not been successful in meeting the needs of these students. He suggests that we disband the current remediation system (Title I and learning disabilities) and start over.

Cox and Wilson have studied the reading achievement of mildly learning disabled students in three educational programs: regular classroom with outside support; learning center and self contained special learning

disabilities classroom. The purpose of the investigation was to determine the most effective program structure that provided opportunities for academic gains in learning disabled students. The students' academic responses in reading were measured through pre-and post-test evaluation to ascertain the amount of gain of the students in the three different program structures over a five month period of time (Cox & Wilson).

Within the self-contained learning disabilities classroom, a specially designed environment including specific materials and techniques was utilized to enhance the academic achievement of learning disabled students. The daily assignments were individually programmed (lesson plans) for each child, according to the child's achievement level. The children received individualized instruction in all academic subjects' areas within the self-contained classroom (Cox & Wilson).

At the learning center the students received supportive assistance for 30 minutes to a maximum of two hours per day in the areas of reading and other process deficit areas. The individualized daily assignment, according to the student's achievement level, was coordinated with the child's program in the regular classroom. In the learning center specific materials and techniques were used to enhance the academic achievement of the mildly disabled child (Cox & Wilson).

Lastly, the learning disabled students in the regular classroom received all their reading instruction in the regular classroom. The teachers received assistance from specialists on materials and techniques that were utilized with these students. The regular education teacher had total responsibility for the educational process of these students. The children received some individualized instruction and programming. However, much of the work was group work (Cox & Wilson)

Results indicated that the disabled students make more reading progress in the self-contained special class than do learning disabled students in learning centers or regular classrooms with outside support from learning specialist. The students in the self-contained class had a higher reading achievement post-test raw score than the learning disabled students in the regular class with outside support from a learning specialist. The learning disabled student in the self contained special class also had higher reading achievement scores than the learning disabled student in the learning center. The implications of this study would indicate that from a cognitive point of view, learning disabled students would be better served from a self-contained special education classroom (Cox & Wilson)

Here's the story of Brett, a sixth grade student experiencing profound difficulties in learning to read, and the instructional intervention that helped

him make significant progress. This article describes a student diagnosed as learning disabled whose test score on a school-administered standardized reading test was at the second grade level (2.8). A commentary on the pupil and the schools responsibilities to provide effective reading instruction follows (Morris, Ervin &Conrad 1996).

Brett was tested for learning disabilities and diagnosed in the second grade. He spent third and fourth grade in a self-contained special education class but advanced little despite the additional help of an after school tutor. In fifth and sixth grade he was mainstreamed into a regular classroom receiving resource help for 90 minutes per day. The resource teacher no longer provided reading instruction but instead concentrated on completing assignments in his mainstream subjects. At this time Brett was still reading at a second grade level. His mother questioned this approach and asked who was responsible for teaching him to read. Would it be his middle school English teacher, his science teacher or math teacher? At this juncture school personnel recommended Brett to a 4-week summer reading clinic (Morris, Ervin & Conrad).

The principles that guided the tutor's instruction were as follows: determine the child's reading instructional level; (the level at which he is challenged but not frustrated) by administering an informal reading

inventory; use reading material that is of personal interest and significance to the student; build comprehension through informal discussions of stories and articles as they are being read; assess the student's word recognition skills along a continuum of knowledge and then develop systematic word study and explore ways of getting the student to read when he is away from the tutoring setting (Morris, Ervin & Conrad).

These principles guided the lesson plans: guided reading; word study; writing and easy reading. During guided reading Brett and the teacher alternated reading orally stopping to check comprehension and make predictions. This began with a second grade basal and then progressed to chapter books. Brett took chapters home on audiocassette and for the first time in his life finished reading a book. He completed his word study by sorting one-syllable words into vowel patterns. Brett chose his own topics to write on and expressions of ideas were emphasized not mechanical correctness on first drafts. He progressed from three short sentences per topic to two paragraphs by the end of his session. They were revised and edited by his teacher. Brett began a course of easy but meaningful reading in a single series that served to improve his word recognition, fluency and confidence. By summer's end he had made gains in reading and self-confidence (Morris, Ervin & Conrad).

Brett continued tutoring once per week with the tutor from the summer clinic. They repeated all of the same techniques and lessons practiced in the clinic. His tutor also worked out a plan with his classroom teacher and learning disabilities resource teacher to do his spelling with her. He was unable to complete seventh grade assignment so his tutor took him back to fourth grade and began again. Over a two year period Brett progressed steadily from a second grade level to a fourth grade level in reading and spelling (Morris, Ervin & Conrad).

Students may struggle to read because the material they are reading is at their frustration level, not their independent reading level. The inescapable fact remains that they have the potential to learn if they receive appropriate instruction. The responsibility rests with the teacher. Morris states that he has no formula for producing such teachers. He believes it should begin at the graduate level. Graduate method courses should be rigorous and provide teachers with a balanced, comprehensive view of the reading process. Reading teachers in training should be provided with carefully supervised clinical experiences. Until reading and special education faculty members in the colleges of education commit themselves to developing teaching expertise in their graduate students, I do not foresee significant

improvements in the quality of school-based reading instruction (Kauffman, 1994)

Teachers must be trained in the principles and techniques for fostering active reading strategies in severely disabled adolescents. There are strategic mental activities that go beyond the scenes in successful comprehension. The idea of teacher as modeler and coach in the use of cognitive strategies is so new that few teachers have been exposed to it and almost none have received practical training in the application. Thus, there is an obvious need for inservice education. This need is particularly acute for students for teachers of reading disabled adolescents who are characterized as passive learners (Torgueson, 1977).

The Center for Applied Cognitive Science and The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education did a study on how the changes in teacher attitude, principals and techniques resulted in changes in student performance and passivity. Nine experimental and seven control group teachers took part in the study. Each experimental teacher had a "journeyman" teacher who was trained in the teaching methodologies. All teachers were special education teachers. The students and teachers were drawn from middle schools, junior highs and high schools. The small group reading session was the instructional setting for the study (Anderson & Riot 1990).

As a pretest each teacher was videotaped before the study began. They administered three subtests of the Standard Diagnostic Reading Test. Two expository passages were randomly assigned similar in content but different in difficulty. All teachers were expected to teach reading comprehension for approximately twenty half hour sessions, spread over three months, using the provided passages. The experimental teachers received strategy instruction and peer support, the control group did not. The training techniques used with this group involved encouraging teacher/researcher support and shifting the responsibility from teacher to student in order for more active strategies to be fostered in the students. The methodology placed great emphasis on collaborative problem solving and on accessing, trying out and evaluating students' existing strategies. This differs from traditional strategy instruction and resembles transactional strategy instruction (Pressley 1990). One technique that supports this approach is upgrading of questioning. Questions shift from specific content to content free questions that are thought provoking and general to all reading. Posttest videotapes were identical to pretest except the teachers taught the second passage and administered the second form of the standardized test (Anderson & Riot).

The analysis of standardized test score for the experimental and control group showed no differences in phonics and structural analysis. The reading comprehension subtest showed that significantly more experimental students made gains with about 50% of the controls gaining and 80% of the experimental gaining. Results from both groups speak well of any form of direct instruction in expository texts. They also indicate that transactional strategy training may be more effective for text comprehension. The gains in student involvement and willingness to acknowledge reading problems and attempt to solve them demonstrate that such instruction can diminish some of the passivity in learning disabled adolescents (Anderson & Riot 1990).

Ann Helmstetter, a reading specialist at Hackensack Middle School in New Jersey transformed an eight-grade class from apathetic learners to active learners. This process of change went through five main stages: discussing attitudes and goals; positive environment; sharing literature through oral reading; reading for an audience and active learning.

A questionnaire was distributed to ascertain and acknowledge attitudes about reading. "Students should be helped to identify their attitudes and beliefs relative to specific tasks and then encouraged to cultivate attitudes and beliefs that will optimize task performance" (Paris & Gross, 1983).

Next, a positive classroom environment was created with positive statements on bulletin boards and hanging from the ceiling. Helmstetter embarked on reading aloud beginning with Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer*. Trelease says, "The child who is unaware of the richness of literature can have no desire for it." Gradually the amount of time the teacher read lessened and the student's began to volunteer to read. This lead to the idea of acting out the story. Soon the class was doing dramatic readings for assemblies. The students practiced by making audiotapes of themselves. The students were proud of their performance and this generated interest. Three leaders emerged from the group and they began to write their own play. Students learned to cooperate with one another, listen, and respect different opinions and ideas. On their own these youngsters had planned and practiced an activity that involved speaking, listening, reading and writing. These feelings of success had transformed this class of reluctant readers into active learners (Helmstetter, 1986).

Another way to create active learners is through peer mediated reading instruction. Students of near or equal ability are paired together. Sometimes it may be necessary to pair students who are in adjacent reading levels. Students who are reading the same materials will provide each other with

most practice. Students should be paired with socially acceptable partners so that they can work compatibly (Fuchs & Mathes 1991).

Recommendations for organizing peer sessions include: scheduling three weekly sessions for 35 minutes per sessions; conducting the tutoring sessions at the same time every day and reserving part of the time for teacher directed activities to cover specific objectives not addressed by peers. Students must prepare and organize materials and become familiar with a point awarding system and reporting procedures. In 1989-90 every teacher in this federally funded program who implemented peer-tutoring procedures in their classrooms, implemented these procedures with 90% or better accuracy. Once the program gets going teachers report it is easy to implement (Fuchs & Mathes 1991).

Empowering classroom teachers to strengthen literacy development can be done in many ways. A practice was developed over an eight-month period to improve the literacy development of sixth graders in the regular classroom. The goals included supporting the classroom teacher in literacy development, increasing communication between parents and teachers and increasing parental involvement in the education system (Speights 1991).

The staff development and parent involvement sessions were organized based on the needs of the classroom teacher and parents and offered 35

hours of professional in-service and 3 hours of parent in-service. The theme was "New Approaches and Strategies in Teaching Reading to Poor Readers in the Regular Classroom". Findings indicate that teachers creatively demonstrated with success an awareness of incorporating the new approaches presented such as, whole language, cooperative learning, questioning techniques, paired reading, read aloud strategies, discipline approaches, tutoring, learning styles, media assistance, communicating with parent skills, and when to use other professionals and support faculty in the educational process. Teachers and parents also worked together in support of children's learning (Speights 1991).

Parents can be a big part of the learning process. Mary Leonhardt has some suggestions for helping the low-level reader at home. For the thousands and thousands of children who read very little, and have been turned off to reading in school she has some suggestions. In her book *Parents Who Love Reading, Kids Who Don't* she identifies the seven stages of reading parents can lead their children through at home. Stage one is - leafing through books and magazines, stage two - is reading comics, magazines and newspapers, stage three is - that first book, stage four is - very narrow reading, stage five is - branching out, stage six is - wider

reading and stage seven is - becoming an independent reader (Leonhardt 1993).

The main recommendation for parents of low level readers is to start with magazines or comics. Leafing through them makes them feel friendly towards books and makes them feel they are part of the literary world. In the past reading has not been a means by which they have gathered information. Your goal is to change this by bringing home magazines. Watch to see which one your child is attracted to then subscribe to that magazine. Initially they may just page through and look at the pictures but eventually they begin to read them (Leonhardt 1993).

Once the child is firmly into this stage the parent can begin to relax. Magazines and newspapers are bread- and- butter reading. They have short articles; pictures and stories that help the poor reader determine meaning. Comic books have the same characters, the tone and language are the same and essentially the story line is usually the same. For a beginning reader the speed with which they can tear through a comic will increase their self-confidence. Adolescents like the Sports pages in newspapers. Newspaper and magazines are reading the child will do their whole lives. However, you do want to move them on to books (Leonhardt 1993).

Most of the books to start with are series book, category fiction, or both. For younger kids selecting a book is easier. You could recommend something from the Berenstain Bears or Choose Your Own Adventure Book. The older student will be more wary and complaining the book you selected is too easy. They say this because their confidence in reading is so low they pick up on any slight. A general rule when choosing a book is that a first person narrative is easier to follow than a third person narrative. Something else to look for is humor in a book. Otherwise it's a gamble to find the right book. Find books similar to whatever magazines they have been reading (Leonhardt 1993).

Now you've got your child reading. This stage can be frustrating though because they are into very narrow reading. They may be reading sports, biographies or romance novels. Perhaps they are just going from one book in the series to another. That's o.k. Because they are reading. After a while the inevitable will happen, the series or author will run out. With the child confidant in their ability to get through a book, and their habit of reading, you should be able to get them to start branching out (Leonhardt 1993).

Kids in this stage still need a lot of help finding books. Although they are ready to branch out they will probably look for another series or author like the one they have been reading. This is a good time to start using the

library. Take them to the library and let them browse through the books of their favorite genre. Even avid readers remain loyal to the genre that brought them to reading. When the child picks up a book outside of their genre of reading you know they are in the wider reading stage. Children in this phase of reading are now receptive to receiving book suggestions from you. Recommend the books you love to them. Once your child begins looking for magazines and books themselves or visiting bookstores and libraries you know your work as a parent is done. Your child has become an independent reader. A child, who learns to love books, will always love to read. The reader who is continually absorbed in other people's perspectives, in other people's view of the world, is an avid reader (Leonhardt 1993).

Despite the efforts of both parents and educators the prognosis for learning disabled students can be bleak. Follow up studies conducted on learning disabled populations provide little cause for optimism regarding their chances for success in later life (Dreshler, Schumaker, & Lentz, 1984). The majority of them cannot pass minimum competency tests even when tests are modified (Miller, 1983 cited in Dreschler et al; 1984). They seem to plateau at the fourth or fifth grade reading level early in high school and show no further progress (Warner,Schumaker, Alley, & Deschler, 1980).

Since learning disabled students spend most of their school years learning to read (something their average peers can do at the end of third grade), they are deprived of six or more years (Grades four through nine) of reading to learn fundamental vocabulary concepts and information. Learning disabled students are not able to benefit from the instruction that accompanies Chall's Stage three of reading and yet they are able to have the same extensive knowledge repertoire as their peers (Snider & Tarver, 1987)

Chall's (1983) five stages of reading development state that each stage is dependent upon mastery of the previous one. For example, accurate decoding (stage 1) is a prerequisite to fluency (stage 2). Both accuracy and fluency are necessary for the acquisition of knowledge in stage 3. Stage 4 builds upon the knowledge acquired in stage 3. The acquisition of highly specialized knowledge in stage 5 is dependent upon the rich base of information acquired in stages 3 and 4 (Snider &Tarver, 1987).

Despite recent recognition that stage 3 learning plays a pivotal role in the students' transition from the decoding and fluency emphasis in stage 1 and 2 to the comprehension emphasis in stages 4 and 5, few investigations of the learning disabled student's stage 3 deficits have been discovered (Snider & Tarver 1997).

Regardless of what type of services or programs are provided to poor readers, some fundamental instructional implications could be designed based on these five stages. Some suggestions to improve instruction could include: teachers emphasizing reading fluency as soon as students can accurately decode and comprehend letter-sound correspondences, thereby ensuring automatically; effective and efficient instruction in stage 3, specifically teaching vocabulary concepts, general information and reasoning skills; older students should be taught metacognitive processes, comprehension monitoring should detect missing information; and curriculum developers and teachers must not assume that the student has the necessary preskills (schemata) to profit from the typical comprehension instruction, supplemental materials should be developed to accompany content area texts. In Chall's terms (1983) the student who has not "learned to read" cannot "read to learn" (Snider & Tarver 1987).

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Appendix

FORMAT FOR COLLECTION OF DATA
For classified 6th graders in 1998

Name of student	Assign # for students' names	Type of classification	Grade level for reading	Had BSI in 2nd grade